

Ash Wednesday Ushers in Lent, a Time for Coming Closer to God - MabuhayRadio

Written by Francis Fernandez

Tuesday, 24 February 2009 15:07 - Last Updated Tuesday, 24 February 2009 15:08

We cannot let this day go without stimulating in our souls a deep and effective desire to go back once again, to return like the prodigal son, so as to be closer to God. In the Second Reading of today's Mass, St Paul tells us that this is an excellent time for us to bring about our conversion. We entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain ... Behold now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation (Second Reading of the Mass, 2 Cor 5:20-26). God says again, to each one of us, in the depths of our hearts, 'Return to me. Return to me with all your heart.'

Now is the time when this beginning again in Christ is going to be sustained by a special grace from God, proper to the liturgical season that has just started. That is why the Lenten message is replete with joy and hope, even though it is a message of penance and mortification.

When any one of us realizes he is sad, he must think: 'It is because I am not close enough to Christ... 'When one of us becomes aware, for instance, of an inclination towards ill-humor, towards bad temper, he must similarly remind himself. If he throws the blame on things around him, he will be wide of the mark; he will be looking in the wrong direction (A. G. Dorronsoro, Time to Believe). Sometimes it is possible that a certain apathy or spiritual sadness may have its root cause in tiredness or sickness ... but it more frequently stems from a lack of generosity in doing what God asks of us, from an effectually feeble struggle to mortify our senses, from a lack of concern for other people; in a word, it has its origins in a state of lukewarmness.

If we stay close to Christ we will always find the cure for our lack of possible ardor, and re-charge ourselves with the strength to overcome our lukewarmness and those defects that we could never overcome by ourselves. When somebody says: 'I appear to be incorrigibly lazy. I am not tenacious; I don't seem to be able to finish the things I start', today he ought to think 'I am not close enough to Christ' That is why whenever we recognize something as a defect in our

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lives, as a weakness ..., we should immediately refer it to this type of intimate and direct examination: 'I do not seem to have the ability to persevere: I am not close to Christ I am not cheerful: I am not close to Christ. And Christ is saying: Come on! Turn around! Return to me with all your heart!'

It is time for each one of us to recognize that he is being urged on by Jesus Christ. Those of us who sometimes feel inclined to put off this decision should know that, now, the moment has come. Those of us who are pessimistic and who think there is no remedy for our defects should know that the moment has arrived Lent is starting Let us look on it as a time of change and hope (ibid). First Reading: Joel 2:12-18

Psalm: Psalm 51:3-6, 12-14, 17

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20 - 6:2

Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

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